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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-2439-SB-2006

Date of decision: 07.03.2025

Akhtar Hussain

....Appellant

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Harpreet S. Rakhra, Advocate
for the appellant.

Mr. Rishabh Singla, AAG, Punjab.

HARPREET SINGH BRAR, J. (ORAL)

1. The prayer in the present appeal is to set aside the judgment of conviction and order of sentence dated 14.11.2006 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Rupnagar, whereby, the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter ‘NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.10 dated 16.02.2005, under Section 15 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Sohana.

2. The appellant was sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of two years and to pay fine of Rs.2,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for two months.

3. Brief facts of the case are that on 16.02.2005, a police party was on patrolling duty at Bus Stand Sohana and received a secret information that the accused/appellant is selling poppy husk in village Chilla on the motor of Sucha Singh. When the police party conducted a raid, the appellant was

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apprehended with 18 Kg 500 grams of Poppy Husk and two samples of which were drawn from the bag. The samples of 250 gram each were then sent to the chemical examiner who confirmed the contents to be 'Poppy Head'. Subsequently, FIR (*supra*) was registered under Section 15 of the NDPS Act.

4. Learned counsel for the appellant submits that the learned Court below has fallen into grave error in convicting the appellant, as his guilt has not been proved beyond reasonable doubt. He further contends that the alleged contraband was recovered from the open place which is accessible to anyone and where three persons were present and on seeing the police party, two of them except the appellant, managed to run away and with respect to them, the police did not make any investigation. Moreover, the fact that the appellant was in conscious possession of the contraband has not been proved on record. Further, there was also an unexplained delay in sending the sample of the alleged contraband to the FSL Laboratory. Further, the mandatory provisions of the NDPS Act have not been followed in the present case. Lastly, he submits that the appellant has already undergone a period of 01 month and 05 days in custody and is not involved in any other criminal case.

5. *Per contra*, learned State counsel opposes the prayer of the appellant as the learned Court below has passed a well-reasoned judgment based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record as such, he does not deserve any leniency.

6. Having heard learned counsel for the parties and after perusing the record with their able assistance, it transpires that the appellant was convicted for being in possession of 18 kg & 500 grams of Poppy Husk, i.e. intermediate quantity, attracting the offence of Section 15 NDPS Act, for which no minimum



punishment has been prescribed. As per his custody certificate, he is not involved in any other case and has already undergone an actual sentence of 01 month and 05 days out of total sentence of 02 years, in the instant case. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 15 NDPS Act, this Court is of the opinion that it would be in the interest of justice, if the sentence awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period already undergone by him.

7. In *Deo Narain Mandal vs. State of U.P. (2004) 7 SCC 257*, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has opined that awarding of sentence is not a mere formality in criminal cases. When a minimum and maximum term is prescribed by the statute with regard to the period of sentence, a discretionary element is vested in the Court. Background of each case, which includes factors like gravity of the offence, manner in which the offence is committed, age of the accused, should be considered while determining the quantum of sentence and this discretion is not to be used arbitrarily or whimsically. After assessing all relevant factors, proper sentence should be awarded bearing in mind the principle of proportionality to ensure the sentence is neither excessively harsh nor does it come across as lenient.

8. Further, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Ravada Sasikala vs. State of AP AIR 2017 SC 1166*, has reiterated that the imposition of sentence also serves a social purpose as it acts as a deterrent by making the accused realise the damage caused not only to the victim but also to the society at large. The law in this regard is well settled that opportunities of reformation must be granted and such discretion is to be exercised by evaluating all attending circumstances of each case by noticing the nature of the crime, the manner in which

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the crime was committed and the conduct of the accused to strike a balance between the efficacy of law and the chances of reformation of the accused.

9. A perusal of the judgment of conviction passed by the learned trial Court indicates no perversity in its findings and the same is based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record. However, the FIR (supra) was lodged on 16.02.2005 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last about 20 years. Since his conviction, he has grown into a law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

10. Therefore, in view of the discussion above, the present appeal is disposed of in the following terms:-

(i) The judgment dated 14.11.2006 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Rupnagar, is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 14.11.2006 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 02 years along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

(iii) The sentence of fine of Rs.2000/- imposed upon the appellant by the learned Court below shall remain intact. The appellant is directed to deposit the said amount in the trial Court within one month from the date of receipt of certified copy of this order. In case of default of payment of fine, the appellant shall be liable to be taken into custody and made to undergo rigorous imprisonment for one month.

11. Pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed of.

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

07.03.2025*Neha*

Whether speaking/reasoned : Yes/No
Whether reportable : Yes/No